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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8524  
INFO RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH PRIORITY 5153

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 001101

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

FOR EAP/MLS, DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/24/2018  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [VM](#)  
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATE - LE QUOC QUAN

REF: A. HANOI 1020  
[1](#)B. HANOI 1007

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR BRIAN AGGELER.  
REASONS 1.4 (B/D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Prominent dissident attorney Le Quoc Quan remains under open-ended "administrative detention" and is called in for regular questioning by police. Still, he is generally able to meet others without hindrance and can travel outside Hanoi, although he was prohibited from traveling to Norway earlier this month. An observant Catholic, Quan has followed the prayer vigils at the Thai Ha parish closely and, though disbarred, has offered back channel legal assistance to the parish. Quan is aware that his e-mails and text messages are monitored, but remains in close contact with other dissidents, frequently using Skype, and is active in the Viet Tan Party and with the Association of Political and Religious Prisoners. END SUMMARY.

Allowed to Travel in Vietnam but Closely Monitored  
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[1](#)2. (C) Speaking in his office September 4, dissident attorney Le Quoc Quan explained to Poloff that like most dissidents in Vietnam, he is generally able to meet with others without problem and is free to travel outside Hanoi, even though he remains subject to "administrative detention." Still, he is asked to attend regular "working sessions" with the police, who also frequently visit his office. During one of these sessions at the police station, Quan saw all of his e-mails and text messages printed out and on the desk of the officer in charge of questioning. Plainclothes police are also stationed across from his office to monitor those who meet with him.

[1](#)3. (C) Despite these measures, Quan remains in regular contact with other dissidents. He stated that he prefers using Skype, arguing that it is more difficult for MPS to monitor than cell phones or e-mail.

Prohibited From Traveling Overseas  
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[1](#)4. (C) Quan was scheduled to travel to Norway on September 1 to discuss civil society and poverty reduction with parliamentarians, but was discouraged by MPS from applying for a visa. Nevertheless, he decided to travel and scheduled a visa interview. On the day of the interview, he was detained in his office for four hours by police and missed his appointment. He rescheduled his interview for the following day and was able to receive a visa. When he arrived at the airport on September 1, Quan was swarmed, he said, by about 20 plainclothes and uniformed MPS officers who informed him that he was not allowed to travel overseas. The officers detained him for several hours and canceled his passport. Asked for an explanation, the MPS

stated that he was prohibited from traveling overseas while under MPS investigation.

#### Catholics Unite

15. (C) Like Nguyen Khac Toan (reftels), Quan is a very observant Catholic. In January, Quan was beaten by police while participating in a prayer vigil at the site of the former Papal Nuncio's residence. Quan said that he has not participated in the ongoing prayer vigils at the disputed property near the Thai Ha Catholic Church, but has provided backchannel legal advice to the Thai Ha parish, despite being disbarred. Quan said that he had prepared a one-page document widely disseminated by parish priests that counsels parishioners what to do if detained by the police. Quan was particularly critical of negative coverage of the vigils in the state-controlled media coverage, arguing that this has only made priests and parishioners more willing to demonstrate.

#### Background on Le Quoc Quan

16. (C) Le Quoc Quan traveled to the United States in September 2006 as a Reagan-Fascell Fellow sponsored by DRL and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Quan, his wife Nguyen Thi Thu Hien and their infant daughter returned to Vietnam from Washington in March 2007. Quan was arrested four days after his return by the Hanoi police and was charged with "seeking to undermine the state" under

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Article 79 of the criminal code. Quan was released after three months in jail, following extensive U.S. and international pressure. Quan has been disbarred but continues to work as a consultant with funding from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, JBIC and SIDA. He receives residual income from a business that he owned with his brother prior to his arrest through stock listed in his wife's name. Quan remains active in the Viet Tan Party and with the Association of Political and Religious Prisoners. MICHALAK